

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 004131

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2015

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: MOD MEMO ON VENEZUELAN ARMS PURCHASE

REF: BOGOTA 03929

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.5 (b) and (d)

1. (C) A week after the Senate Second Committee conducted a public hearing on Venezuelan arms purchases (reftel), an undated memo from the Colombian Defense Ministry responding to congressional inquiries on Venezuelan arms purchases was leaked to the press. The secret memorandum was addressed to the Secretary General of the Senate and noted that the purchase would deepen the military imbalance in the region. An unofficial translation of the memo follows:

Unofficial Translation:

2. (C) Begin Text:

Dear Sir:

In the most attentive and cordial manner I send you the reply to the questions in Proposition No. 197 of 2005, presented by the Honorable Senators Manuel Ramiro Velasquez Arroyave, Hernan Andrade Serrano, and Jimmy Chamorro Cruz.

I hope the information supplied will be useful in your legislative work.

Cordially,
Jorge Alberto Uribe Echavarrria
Minister of National Defense

Minister of National Defense Jorge Alberto Uribe Echavarria's response to the questions of Proposition No. 197 of 2005, Senate of the Republic

Proposition No. 197

1. What is the official position of the Colombian Government with respect to the massive sale of arms and war equipment on the part of the Venezuelan Government?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is exclusively responsible for this answer.

2. Does the Colombian Government consider that this massive sale represents a danger to the peaceful equilibrium of the Andean region?

It is an undeniable fact that the rearming of the Venezuelan military deepens the military imbalance in the Andean region. At this time there is no clear justification for the acquisition of certain types of arms with strategic range in a region that has led efforts to limit military spending on external defense, as has been spelled out in the "Lima Agreement--Andean Accord for Peace and Security; Limitation and Control of Expenditures Destined for External Defense," written by the Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministries of the member countries of the Andean Community on 17 June 2002.

3. Does the Colombian Government consider that this sale breaks the military balance between Colombia and Venezuela?

The sales announced by the Venezuelan Government only add to the military imbalance with Colombia that was initiated with Venezuela's purchase of F-16 planes, Lupo Frigates from Spain, and French AMX-30 tanks.

4. Does the Colombian Government believe that Spain is maintaining its neutrality towards Colombia-Venezuela relations, despite the deal for corvettes and other equipment that the Venezuelan Government has already made?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is exclusively responsible for this answer.

5. What is Colombia's current military balance with Venezuela?

(1) Marked aerial superiority of combat readiness. Venezuelan advantage of 2.3 to 1 when considering all functioning equipment. 47 Venezuelan planes, 20 Colombian planes

(2) Relative Venezuelan superiority of combat support planes. 46 planes versus 13 Colombian planes. Ratio of 3.5 to 1

(3) Venezuela possesses a superior personnel transport capability of 1.936 to 1.399 pax with all available equipment functioning. Colombia possesses an actual available transport capacity of 700 pax.

-- 7 C-130 aircraft, 90 troop capacity each
-- 10 C-295 aircraft, 71 troop capacity each
-- 3 G-222 aircraft, 53 troop capacity each
-- 23 M-28 aircraft, 19 troop capacity each
-- Total troop capacity: 1,936

(4) Venezuela possesses a superior unloading capacity of personnel and equipment that makes amphibious operations limited to 4 Marine Battalions possible.

(5) Naval power is considered relatively superior, with a Venezuelan advantage of two missile frigates and a capacity to arm submarines.

(6) Venezuela possesses a marked superiority in armored combat vehicles that allows it to conduct offensive long-range operations with the support of self-propelled and aimed artillery, available to the border 24 hours after initiating a move. Venezuela has 274 AMX30, AMX13, Scorpion, and M18 tanks, while Colombia has none.

(7) Colombia has a numerical superiority of men and combat experience in irregular warfare, but not in regular war. Venezuela has conducted combined, double-action exercises.

(8) There is a greater concentration of Venezuelan troops on the border.

16. Does the Colombian Government know the destination of the thousands of old weapons that will be replaced by the Venezuelan Government? If the answer is no, will Colombia ask for a response from Venezuela regarding this issue?

The government of President Hugo Chavez intends to provide the guns that will be replaced to the national militias, a new reserve force created with an initial force of 100,000 men.

The Colombian Government is worried about the destination of the arms that will be replaced by the AK-103 arms. The Minister of Defense and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have both expressed this concern.

17. Will the Colombian Government deliver a statement to the Venezuelan Government regarding the acquisition of arms?

The National Government raised its concerns about the acquisition at the Summit of Presidents in Puerto Ordaz.

18. What concrete results has the Government of Venezuela presented with respect to Colombia's denunciations of the presence of important guerrilla commanders in Venezuelan territory?

The Venezuelan Government has not presented concrete reports with respect to the denunciations, but it has publicly stated that it does not support Colombian guerrillas and that it will conduct operations against illegal armed groups that enter Venezuelan territory.

Cordially,

Jorge Alberto Uribe Echavarria
Minister of National Defense

End Text
WOOD